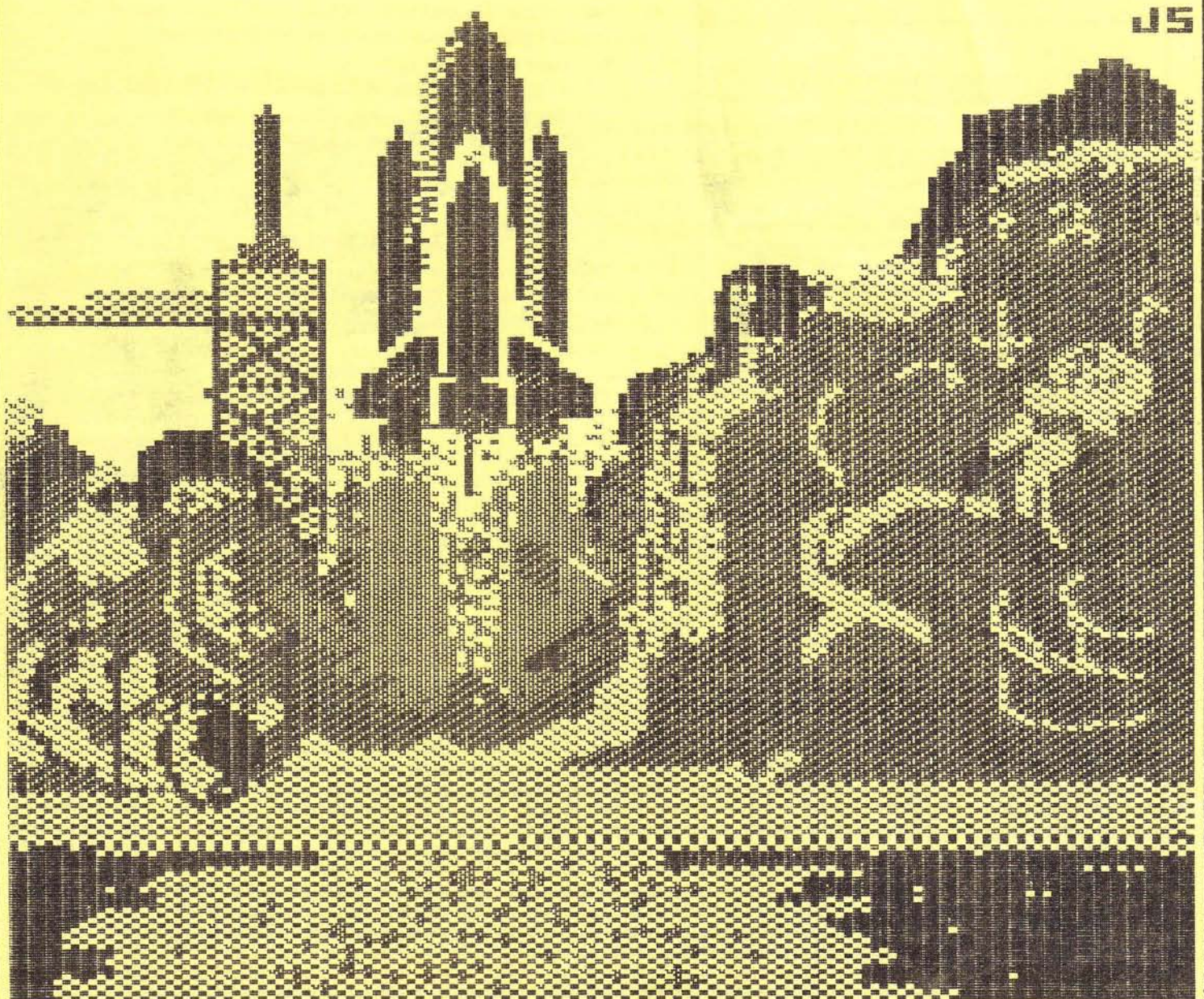


SLCC Journal

San Leandro Computer Club

January 1987

A New Year...
A New Hope...



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SLCC Journal

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GENERAL MEETING MINUTES December 2, 1986

The final meeting of 1986 was called to order at 8:05 PM by President Barton. Officers in attendance Treas. Hansen and Secty. Moran.

Presentations were the first item covered at this months meeting. A gift gavel was given to Ex VP Jim Hood for his excellent job as meeting chairman during his term as VP. A gift plaque was presented for Tom Bennett for his years of service to our club. Tom has been transferred to southern California by his employer and will be missed for the many hours he put in for the club.

Eight bit Software chairmen Cliff and Mark previewed the December floppy with its usual good assortment of the latest software.

Program Chairman Dick Scott advised the members that Bill Walden who authored "FAMILY HISTORY" would not make his scheduled guest speaker appearance due to illness. Dick made an abridged demonstration of the program to show the members the general abilities of this genealogy program.

Following this demonstration the usual break was taken to allow all to enjoy our year end party.

When the meeting was resumed the Treasurer and President made a final report on the very successful ATARI EXPO.

The meeting was then opened for general discussion most of which centered on the FLOPPY of the month and the type of programs the members would like to have. Jim Hood reported on the work at Children's Hospital and the need of equipment for their computer program. To this end the following motion was made by Hood and seconded by many.

MOTION - To allot up to \$700 for the Executive Board to purchase equipment for the hospital program. Motion carried.

Last but not least the printer was raffled and another successful year was closed out at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Jim Moran - Secretary

Strategic Simulations **Enriching Your ST's "Phantasie" Life**

by Dan Cude

Not too long ago I was asked to review "Phantasie", a new Strategic Simulations, Inc. adventure game for the Atari ST. It is available for many other machines including the Atari 8-bits. While I have always enjoyed games, I had not obtained one for my ST.

Let me tell you, I don't want to give this one back. Every night someone in the family is trying to get on to play this game. It's so habit forming, it's probably illegal.

Let me also confess that adventuring is not my area of expertise. Therefore, this review is one from a novice's point of view.

One must realize that an adventuring game is one of learning. From the start, one must learn to take notes - especially when reading the instruction manual. There is a very large amount of information one must accumulate, digest and correlate prior to starting. Being adventurous myself, I felt once through it very quickly should do just fine. Not true.

Either the manual is put together poorly or I needed experience adventuring. In either case, I kept my manual at my side and used it more frequently than the magic spells to battle the monsters.

The quest is to explore the Isle of Gelnor, with its many forests, mountains, paths, dungeons, waters and islands. You are after enough experience, wealth and appropriate articles which, when used intelligently enough can rid the isle of the dreaded Black Knights and destroy the evil sorcerer Nikademus.

The first thing one must do is to gather a party similar to my car pool. Humans, Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Halflings and other creatures must be selected at the town where the game starts - Pelnor. Weapons, armor and shields are also available and needed to fight the monsters. Once the party is formed you are ready to proceed to the great land which long ago was peaceful and beautiful.

The island is made up of 16 sections through which you travel (one section on the screen at a time). Some have towns, some don't. Towns are safe havens which novices

can retreat to when it's time to let your nine-year-old do her homework. Inns and dungeons are also there.

When you run into a mess of monsters, you always have the option to fight, flee, give up, etc. Most often you fight. As the melee starts, you select how each of your 6 party members will fight. Time to check the manual...

After the battle (if you survive), you may be rewarded with things of value. Quite often during the first few attempts at forming a party, all of my party members would get killed. No doubt, it was due to my lack of skill at knowing when to fight or flee.

Once you have survived long enough to enter a dungeon, your fighting really begins. However your rewards are much larger. You can obtain great amounts of information relating to your adventure as well as gold and other valuables. If you survive, you can return to town where you can rest, review scrolls and buy and sell many things. This is the time you can also increase your abilities by obtaining training or learning new magic spells.

When it's midnight and you are starting to see a yellow tint in your eyes you can save the game for more adventures at another time. I wish I could tell how the game ends, but I haven't gotten that far yet.

I'm still afraid to battle those Black Knights. They are the baddest things in Gelnor. I have become so attached to the members of the party that I would feel very bad if one of them were to be killed. Besides, I have a lot of time and gold invested in them little guys...

It says on the package that it takes 30 to 60 hours to complete the game. I'm not sure if that's an accurate estimate or not, but I have thoroughly enjoyed playing this game. You can be sure that when I give this copy back to the club, I'm going out to buy my own. It will be worth the money for the sheer entertainment. In conclusion, all aspects of PHANTASIE are very good with the exception of the manual. The graphics are excellent, sounds are good and the concept is excellent.

Review

Word Processing That's *Really* XLEnt!

by Connie Guy

The First XLEnt Word Processor is an excellent word processor, as its name suggests. I found it easy to learn, and liked its special features.

I was particularly pleased by its soft-hyphen feature. I haven't seen this feature in other word processors I have used, and it is one I have sorely missed. I use a ragged edge rather than a justified one, but if a long word happens to be the last word in a line, then my edge gets extremely ragged. The soft-hyphen takes care of it nicely.

The alignment mode is another novelty to me. It makes it easy to type in a list of numbers or letters in a column and have them all neatly right justified or centered on a decimal point.

When I used search-and-replace I had to scroll through the text to be sure it had done its job because it didn't appear to have done anything. It was instantaneous! I never saw such speed.

The documentation for the word processor is much better than XLEnt's standard for their other software. Any of you who have tried to decipher the docs for Typesetter, etc. will know what I mean. A beginner should be able to figure out the instructions and be up and running in a short time. There is no index, but there is a command summary card in the back which is helpful.

Another plus is that it is not copy-protected, so you can sensibly work with a backup. I hope XLEnt Software will find us worthy of their trust.

Now for my complaints: I hate the little Icon Block in the corner. I know icons are hot right now, and I assume that by using them and the joystick as a sort of mouse we are supposed to feel we are traveling in the fast lane, but honestly fellas, a word processor is a workhorse and the only frills it needs are ones that make writing easier. I spent about ten minutes trying to save some text, and finally discovered that the tiny little picture that I had taken for the disk icon was, in fact, the paste bottle. Using icons takes two key presses and the more conventional methods

use two key presses, so where is the advantage?

Another complaint about First XLEnt is that it uses the typeover mode as the default, while I am accustomed to insert mode. This caused me to lose some text at times because, while it is easy to toggle between typeover and insert, if one exits from edit and then returns, it has defaulted to typeover. Also, it doesn't always return the cursor to where it was before, and I once typed a paragraph before I looked up and discovered I had gone to the top of my text and had wiped out a paragraph. After using this word processor for a while I got used to this little quirk, but look out for it.

These are minor quibbles that I have with First XLEnt. I think it is as good as any word processor I have tried, and at \$29.95 the price is certainly right. It has all of the features you expect in a powerful word processor such as cut-and-paste block moves, search-and-replace, chaining files, advanced screen editing, mail merge, printer drivers, editing two documents at once, two column printing, and all of the other clever little tricks that make word processing a delight.

Don't overlook the fact that it fits right in with the other XLEnt software, so you can make up some very fancy documents by using fonts from Megafont or loading in screens from Typesetter and Rubber Stamp. I plan to make myself some fancy letterheads.

Overall, First XLEnt word processor is as good as any word processor you will find. It has one glaring omission I have not mentioned yet. It has no dictionary. I feel sure they will update very soon to include one because a dictionary seems to be the current bell/whistle that we all must have. Dictionaries aside, you can't miss with this one.

Review

RegentWord II--Having It Both Ways

by Mike Palmer

In case you hadn't noticed, specialization is the current watchword in personal computer software.

Regent Word II is an ST word processing program that should be of primary interest to journalists, magazine writers and others who want an easy-to-use program that's not tough to learn, yet still has a considerable degree of sophistication and flexibility.

It lacks some features that writers of books and academic papers might want. It does not generate tables of contents or do automatic footnoting, but handles the job that it sets out to do very well. I've been using it in my work and have no complaints.

It's become a cliché by now that regular users of a word processing program often prefer a command-oriented system, while those who use a program only sporadically may prefer using the GEM drop-down menus. For many operations, Regent Word II offers both options. To SAVE text on the disk, for instance, you can run your mouse up to the FILE menu and pick your choice, or hit the F2 key. There's a very handy HELP menu that lists all the options available using the Control and Function keys.

Like many others, I think Batteries Included's PaperClip is a sensational word processor on the 8-bit Ataris. But I found myself frustrated looking up commands in the complete but poorly organized manual. The Regent Word II instruction booklet is a bare-bones product, but most of what you want to do can be figured out using the drop-down menus.

(A tip: The Desk menu has an alterable Control Panel, but there's no Save Desktop option. The default colors are white on blue, for instance, but I prefer black on white. I also like a faster cursor movement. Once you change matters to your liking, you have to Quit Regent Word II and use the SAVE DESKTOP option in the GEM menu to make your preferences permanent.)

Another advantage of Regent Word II: unlike the mainframe program I use at work, this program formats as you write. Set your margins, and the words skip down on-screen. There's no format command to hit to see what

your text looks like. Another step forward: italics and boldface are shown clearly on the screen. You do not have to peer closely to see if you've put in the End Boldface command. Nice state-of-the-art features.

Other features that should be mentioned: a built-in 35,000-word spell checker that you can add to; drivers for 18 popular printers plus a generic option; a word counter, plus a calculator.

Regent Word II won't drive laser printers (as far as I can tell from the documentation), and may not be the ideal program in specialized fields, but as a general purpose word processor it does a fine job.



Detail from "DESTROYR.PIC" by K.M.

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A Look Into the New Year for SLCC

Our guest speaker for January is a professional teacher, our very own club treasurer, Lois Hansen. Lois will demonstrate some of the EDUCATIONAL programs from her own library for the ST and eight bit computers. We encourage those that have STs to come to the January meeting.

I have been trying to get someone from ELECTRONIC ARTS to come to our meeting in January. However, due to COMDEX, we will have to take a back seat and wait until February. When their representative comes to next month's meeting, he/she will be presenting the latest EA programs for the 800, XL & XE and ST's. We encourage all of our members to come to the main meeting in February.

A note about the FAMILY HISTORY program. I have the latest version (copyright 1986) from Mr. Walden. Any member of the San Leandro Computer Club that presently has a copy of the old FAMILY HISTORY program, please contact Dick Scott at 887-8357 for an appointment to get an updated version or if you need help with understanding how the program works.

If you would like to purchase the program send a money order for \$21.00 to:

DIRECT LINES SOFTWARE
4755 BAMBOO WAY
FAIR OAKS, CA. 94628

by Dick Scott

SLCC Journal

P.O. Box 1525, San Leandro, CA 94577



Next Meeting:

January 6, 1987 8pm
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